

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU # 49

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Final Report

December 22, 1997

**Visit Conducted on:
October 27 and 28, 1997**

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Students With Disabilities
(Commendations, Citations, and Suggestions for each school)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at SAU # 49 comprised of the following schools: Carpenter Elementary School, Crescent Lake School, Kingswood Regional Middle School, Kingswood Regional High School, Kingswood Regional Vocational Center, Effingham Elementary School, Ossipee Central School, New Durham Elementary School, Tuftonboro Elementary School and Preschool outreach programs. The visiting team met on October 27 and 28, 1997 in order to review the status of special education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the special education director, building principals, regular and special education teachers and related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via phone. Throughout the visit the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on November 17 and 18, 1992*

Based on review of the previous program approval report and the findings of the team that visited all schools within the Governor Wentworth School District in October 1997, it was the consensus that the citations from the previous on-site visitation have all been addressed.

The district wide use of a standardized IEP format provides a consistent document that includes all required components of an IEP. The records reviewed show that staff are including the length of the school year, clearly addressing the question of extended school year programming for each identified student, and are including the time the school day begins and ends each day on IEP's.. The preschool programs use a standardized IEP, which includes "Present Level of Performance"; this area was completed for each student's IEP reviewed. There is documentation that the team considers the least restrictive environment for each identified child.

The multidisciplinary teams, including one qualified examiner for each area of suspected disability, are consistent and appropriate.

The district now has a vocational assessment specialist designated to administer vocational assessments to students with educational disabilities.

ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The visiting team was very favorably impressed with the district wide commitment to inclusion. There was consistent evidence of positive, professional relationships among staff members. The effort put forth by the Governor Wentworth District staff toward quality educational programming for all students is commendable. The visiting team saw evidence of clear, thoughtful and positive leadership at the administrative level, both district wide and at all building levels. Building principals are knowledgeable about the special education process and provide important support systems to the staff within their school (s). The district special education director has established a clear sense of direction and leadership to the district at large. She ensures that information relevant to the special education process is available to the special education staff and encourages training for the district's paraprofessional staff. She, in part, maintains the impressively high standard for special education programming in this district. The superintendent also provides consistent leadership and demonstrates through his understanding of student, staff and program needs his own commitment to quality educational programming. This quality of supportive leadership has had a successful and important impact on the daily work conducted with all students throughout the SAU.

Also of significance to the visiting team was the district wide commitment to maintaining clean, inviting, safe and appropriate physical facilities. The district has recently completed the construction of Crescent Elementary School in Wolfeboro and is in the process of extensively renovating the previously overcrowded Carpenter School. All schools visited within the SAU offered comfortable and attractive learning spaces for all students. The administration, as well as the School Board, are to be commended for their work and successful progress in addressing the important area of building needs.

The district has corrected the citations from the previous program approval visit. Policies and procedures relating to the special education process are complete and well documented. The few issues of non-compliance noted in this report are not seen as patterns but rather as infrequent exceptions. The visiting team did note that it often takes longer than forty-five days to complete student evaluations however there are signed extensions in each case. Further, this district, along with all other NH districts, will now need to put in place local processes and procedures in response to the new Federal Regulations pertaining to the IDEA Amendments, effective June 4, 1997. The visiting team felt that the positive, child centered educational programming offered by the Governor Wentworth staff is of a high quality and that the district is to be commended for their successful educational programs.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

SAU WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is a district wide commitment to inclusion and clear evidence that regular and special education staff work together to insure successful programming for all students in this SAU.
- Professional staff demonstrate a high level of professionalism and a well developed knowledge of the current best practices in education.
- Staff development opportunities for paraprofessional staff are offered throughout the district. A significant number of paraprofessional staff have participated in training programs. They are integral and valued members of the school community.
- The establishment of the Diagnostic Prescriptive Teacher positions at each site is to be commended. The daily communication and support they are able to offer to special education staff and programs alike is recognized as important by building level staff.
- Building level administrators throughout the district demonstrate good knowledge of the special education process and provide the leadership necessary to support quality educational programming.
- The superintendent of schools and the special education director provide broad leadership and consistency throughout the SAU.
- The parents interviewed all expressed satisfaction with their child's educational program as well as with the communication and working relationship with school staff.
- All school buildings are clean, attractive and well maintained. The community has recently supported a major building and renovation project. Appropriate space is made available throughout the district for regular and special education programming.
- Special education policies and procedures are well documented and appropriately carried out.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

There are no district wide citations.

SUGGESTIONS:

Please see individual school summaries for specific suggestions.

CARPENTER SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Developmental Resource Room, Resource Room, Modified Regular, Speech and Language Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is a positive educational environment at Carpenter School, despite the ongoing construction. The staff have taken advantage of the construction to invite workers into the classrooms to talk about their jobs and the work they are doing. Nice community connection.
- There is a strong team approach between the diagnostic prescriptive teacher (DPT), special educators, classroom teachers, parents and staff.
- The development of clear learning styles on student IEP's is well done.
- The speech/language pathologist is very effective in her service delivery.
- The building principal provides support and leadership to the special education programs and to the overall school programs as well.

CITATIONS:

Ed #1107.05 3 files did not have the evaluation completed within 45 days.

SUGGESTIONS:

In evaluation team situations where the DPT is acting as both LEA representative and the assessment specialist, the visiting team suggests that careful attention be paid to "appropriate team membership". The intent behind evaluation team meetings is to make certain that representation is "multi-disciplinary" in nature and that a variety of individuals share their knowledge and expertise. In reviewing student files it appears that evaluation teams have minimal participation from a multi-disciplinary team, although team composition does meet requirements as outlined in state standards.

CRESCENT LAKE SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Resource Room, Developmental Resource Room, Modified Regular Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- Crescent Lake School is a beautiful, new facility with space designed for all service providers.
- The developmental resource room offers a very positive in-house placement that meets the needs of this specific student population.
- The regular education staff appear to be very involved in including the educationally disabled students in the classroom.
- The diagnostic prescriptive teacher is highly regarded by staff, parents and students alike. She has been very successful in establishing good systems of communication among all parties.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork evident throughout the school.
- Special education staff are always re-evaluating the school's programs to measure progress and consider any program improvements needed.
- Occupational therapy services are well provided.

CITATIONS:

Ed #1107.7(c) 1 file: The speech/language pathologist was not present at an evaluation team meeting to determine a student's disability.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The resource room would benefit from having at least one computer in the room.
- Specialists assigned to duties at both Carpenter and Crescent Schools have difficulty dividing time between schools, particularly if the duty falls in the middle of the school day.

KINGSWOOD REGIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Modified Regular, Resource Room, Developmental Learning Center, Emotionally Handicapped Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school atmosphere is calm and orderly.
- The team structure is very good, allowing a schedule of daily teaming for the purpose of curriculum development, student plans, general communication, etc.
- Communication among all team members throughout the school is evident and effective. In particular, the communication that occurs on behalf of identifying student needs and establishing a plan is to be commended.
- The system for monitoring student behavior in the classrooms is well designed and effective.
- The diagnostic prescriptive teachers offer a system of communication and support that is appreciated by the school staff. This model appears to be very effective.
- The commitment to staff development is evident and to be commended.

CITATIONS:

There are no specific citations for Kingswood Regional Middle School

SUGGESTIONS:

- The evaluation criteria is identical for each of the five IEP's reviewed. The team suggests a more individualized consideration of evaluation for each student's plan.
- The name of LEA representative attending a student's IEP meeting should be the same on all paperwork.
- The identification of responsibility for implementing the IEP could be more clearly described in the IEP. All IEP's reviewed indicated in general terms only that the special educators and classroom teachers are responsible.
- The transition of student's from the Emotionally Handicapped Resource Room to the mainstream may benefit from in-house review and discussion regarding the best practices available to further integrate these students.
- A more developed description of related services, classroom modifications and evaluation criteria is suggested in the IEP development process.

KINGSWOOD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL (including Vocational Program)
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Program(s) Visited: Modified Regular Program , Developmental Resource Room,
Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- All records reviewed were in compliance.
- The administrative team is supportive of the special education staff and all related processes.
- Regular education staff are very effective in accommodating the individual learning styles of their students.
- There is a strong teaming concept in place at Kingswood Regional High School.
- All Kingswood Regional High School staff were pleasant and cooperative to the visiting team throughout the onsite process.
- The school building is very clean and well maintained. There is a positive learning atmosphere throughout the school.
- The students with severe disabilities are successfully included in all aspects of the high school community.

CITATIONS:

There are no specific citations for Kingswood Regional High School.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Provide ongoing staff development opportunities on topics related to inclusion.
- Consider the need to budget for the provision of any special education related equipment or supplies for the vocational program.
- The diagnostic prescriptive teacher model is effective. Some additional workdays may allow for assistance with summer planning and scheduling.
- The identification of a counselor to provide direct counseling to emotionally disabled students in both group and individual sessions should be considered.
- Evaluate the need for additional support staff to assist in the implementation of IEP goals and objectives.

TUFTONBORO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Modified Regular, Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is a very positive learning environment at the Tuftonboro Elementary School.
- A positive rapport exists between regular and special education staff. Staff relies on team planning to identify student needs and establish programs.
- The special education records are well organized.
- The Diagnostic Prescriptive Teacher is very knowledgeable about the students.
- Observations are conducted on every child who is referred or reevaluated by the special education team.

CITATIONS:

Ed #1111.01 2 files: extended school year was not considered prior to April 30th.

Ed #1109.04 1 file contained only evidence of written prior notice.

SUGGESTIONS:

- When completing written prior notice, complete the section “other options considered” and “why they were rejected” with more detail. Presently “none” is recorded.

NEW DURHAM SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Modified Regular, Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is a high degree of staff communication.
- There is a successful, fully inclusive special education model in place. Special education specialists are working closely with regular education teachers and are, at time, teaching whole class lessons. There is a clear sense that all staff are responsible for all of the school's students.
- The building administration is very supportive of special education.
- The parents interviewed state that they are very happy with the school and with the services provided.

CITATIONS:

Ed #1115.06 3 files did not contain evidence that least restrictive environment was discussed.

Ed #1111.01 1 file did not contain documentation that extended school year was considered.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Insure that special education forms include a place to address the least restrictive environment program placement.

EFFINGHAM AND OSSIPPEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
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Program(s) Visited: Modified Regular, Itinerant Services/Resource Room at Effingham
Modified Regular, Resource Room, Developmental Resource Room,
STEP I, GWRSD Integrated Preschool.

COMMENDATIONS:

- The inclusion model in both schools is excellent with very good support from regular education teachers. A strong model of teaming appears to be highly effective.
- The overall quality of staff is excellent.
- The building principal is very knowledgeable, supportive of staff and programs and involved at all levels.
- The diagnostic prescriptive teacher is efficient and does a good job of overall coordination.
- The buildings are warm, inviting and highly effective learning environments for all students.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Include team members titles when signing written prior notice documents.
- Consider organizing file folders in a consistent order for each student record. Discard multiple copies of paperwork.
- Increase psychologist time to allow for evaluations to be conducted in a more timely fashion.
- Increase attention to ensuring that evaluations are completed within 45 days. Five files indicated that evaluations were not completed within 45 days, however parents had signed an agreement to extend the process.

SAU # 49 PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Program(s) Visited: Preschool Community Outreach Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is a positive building environment for learning.
- A strong interrelationship exists among staff members. There is a high degree of professional quality to the work that is being done.
- All staff are very knowledgeable about the specific needs of pre-school students.
- Student observations are completed on all students during the evaluation process.

CITATIONS:

Ed #1107.02 (b) 1 file did not include a referral form.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider a more clearly designed referral process. The system should be clearly separate from the pre-referral process.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU # 49

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

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CITATIONS:

1107.03 (A) 1 file: evaluation team was not multidisciplinary - no L.D. specialist at meeting.
1107.08 (D)

1107.07 (c)(1) 1 file: SEE/PT did not consist of three people

1109.01 (J) 1 file: IEP did not have individuals or service providers listed as responsible for implementing services.

SUGGESTIONS:

- This record reflected careful monitoring of the student's educational and social/emotional needs. The single area that is unclear to the reviewer was the vocational evaluation. The team did not fully document the decision to delay a vocational evaluation. While the circumstances surrounding this student's placement indicate that the vocational evaluation is not necessary at this time, clearer documentation of the team's decision is suggested.
- The visiting team suggests that the LEA contact the private facility to obtain copies of student schedules documenting that students are receiving services contained in the IEP and that the student has access to minimum state standards.